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REMARKS OF
REV. JOHN WESLEY,
 ON THE CHARACTER AND WRITINGS OF
EMMANUEL SWEDENBORG.

1. "I was born," says the Baron, "in the year 1689. My father, Jasper Swedenborg, was bishop of Westragothia. King Charles the Twelfth appointed me assessor in the Metallic college, in which office I continued till the year 1747, when I quitted the office, to give myself wholly to the new function which the Lord had called me to. In 1719, I was ennobled by Queen Ulrica Eleonora, and named Swedenborg. I am a fellow of the Royal Academy of Sciences, at Stockholm. In the year 1734, I published the '*Regnum Minerale*,' in three volumes folio; and in 1738, I took a journey into Italy, and stayed a year at Venice and Rome.

"In the year 1743, the Lord was pleased to manifest himself to me in a personal appearance, to open in me a sight of the spiritual world, and to enable me to converse with spirits and angels; and this privilege I have enjoyed ever since. From that time I began to publish various unknown *arcana*, that have been either seen by me, or revealed to me, concerning God, the spiritual sense of Scripture, the state of man after death, heaven and hell, and many important truths."

This is dated, "London, 1769." I think he lived nine or ten years longer.

2. Many years ago, the Baron came over to England, and lodged at one Mr. Brockmer's, who informed me, (and the same information was given me by Mr. Mathesius, a very serious Swedish clergyman, both of whom were alive when I left London, and, I suppose, are so still,) that while he was in his house he had a violent fever; in the height of which, being totally delirious, he broke from Mr. Brockmer, ran into the street stark naked, proclaimed himself the Messiah, and rolled himself in the mire. I suppose he dates from this time his admission into the society of angels. From this time we are undoubtedly to date that peculiar species of insanity which attended him, with scarce any intermission, to the day of his death.

3. In all history I find but one instance of an insanity parallel to this: I mean, that related by the Roman poet, of the gentleman at Argos, in other respects a sensible man,—

*Qui se credebat miros audire tragædos,
 In tacuo latus sessor plausorque theatro,—*

"who imagined himself to hear admirable tragedies, and undoubtedly saw as well as heard the actors, while he was sitting alone, and clapping them in the empty theatre." This seems to have been a purely natural disorder, although not easy to account for. Whether any thing preternatural was added in the case of the Baron, I do not undertake to determine.

4. The accounts of those "admirable tragedies" which he has published take up many quarto volumes. I have read little more of them than what we have in English, except his inimitable piece, *De Nuptiis Cælestibus*,—"Of the Marriages in Heaven." To the reading of this, I acknowledge, I was invited by

the newness of the subject ; and I cannot doubt, but the same circumstance (though they were not sensible of it) contributed much to the pleasure which those pious men, Mr. Cl., Mr. Ha., and Mr. Cl—s, have received from his writings. The same pleasure they naturally desired to impart to their countrymen, by translating, publishing, recommending, and propagating them with their might. They doubtless found an additional pleasure from the huge admiration wherewith many received them ; and I should not wonder if some of these should be adopted into the society of angels, just as the Baron himself was ; nay, I cannot but apprehend, that they have already attained to a degree of the same illumination.

5. Desiring to be thoroughly master of the subject, I procured the translation of the first volume of his last and largest theological work, entitled, “True Christian Religion.” (The original the Baron himself presented me with, a little before he died.) I took an extract thereof from the beginning to the end, that I might be able to form a more accurate judgment. And one may trace, through the whole, remains of a fine genius, “majestic, though in ruins !” From the whole I remark, that what Mr. Law oddly imputes to Sir Isaac Newton is truly imputable to the Baron : he “ploughed with Jacob Behmen’s heifer,” and that both in philosophy and divinity. But he far exceeded his master : his dreams are more extraordinary than those of Jacob himself.

6. Nothing can be more extraordinary than his manner of expounding the Holy Scriptures ; a specimen of which he has given in his exposition of the Decalogue, in which he undertakes to show, not only the literal and spiritual, but even the celestial, meaning of each commandment. For example :—

“By the fourth commandment, in the spiritual sense, is meant the regeneration and reformation of man. The work of regeneration is successive.” This is borrowed from Jacob Behmen. “Answering in its several stages to man’s conception, formation in the womb, his birth, and his education. The first act of the new birth is reformation ; the second act of it is regeneration.” That is, in plain English, the second act of the new birth is the new birth !

“In a spiritual sense, by honouring father and mother is meant revering and loving God and the church. In a celestial sense, by father is meant revering and loving God and the church. In a celestial sense, by father is meant God ; by mother, the communion of saints.

“The celestial meaning of the sixth commandment is, Thou shalt not hate God.

“Committing adultery, in a spiritual sense, is adulterating the word of God.

“Stealing, in the celestial sense, is the taking away divine power from the Lord.”

7. I will oblige the reader with a few more of his extraordinary expositions :—

“In Scripture, by a garden, a grove, woods, are meant, wisdom, intelli-

gence, science; by the olive, the vine, the cedar, the poplar, and the oak, are meant the good and truth of the church, under the different characters of celestial, spiritual, rational, natural, and sensual; by a lamb, an ox, a sheep, a calf, a goat, are meant innocence, charity, and natural affection; by Egypt, is signified what is scientific; by Ashur, what is rational; by Edom, what is natural; by Moab, the adulteration of good; by Ammon, the adulteration of truth; by Jacob, is meant the church natural; by Israel, the church spiritual; and by Judah, the church celestial."

Can any person of common understanding defend any of these expositions? Are they not so utterly absurd, so far removed from all shadow of reason, that, instead of pronouncing them the dictates of the Holy Ghost, we cannot but judge them to be whims of a distempered imagination? A thousand more, equally absurd, are to be found in all his writings; but I believe these are abundantly sufficient to show the man.

8. Equally extraordinary is the account which the Baron gives of charity and faith:—

"When a man keeps the ten commandments, charity follows of course.

"Charity consists in living well.

"Charity consists in willing what is good."

That both these accounts are wrong is certain; but who can reconcile one with the other?

"There can be no faith in an invisible God."

This is bold indeed! Was it intended to confute St. Paul, making use of that very expression in describing the faith of Moses, "He endured as seeing Him that was invisible?"

"Faith in general is a belief that whoever lives well, and believes right shall be saved.

This definition is quite ambiguous: believing right may have a hundred different meanings; and it is utterly false, if that expression means any more than a belief "that God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

Rather, faith in general is "a divine evidence of things unseen."

"The Lord is charity and faith in man; and man is charity and faith in the Lord."

I make no scruple to affirm, this is as arrant nonsense as was ever pronounced by any man in Bedlam.

9. Be this a specimen of the Baron's skill in expounding the Scriptures. Come we now to his memorable visions and revelations.

Any serious man may observe, that many of these are silly and childish to the last degree; that many others are amazingly odd and whimsical; many palpably absurd, contrary to all sound reason; and many more, contrary, not only to particular texts, but to the whole tenor, of Scripture.

These are interspersed with all the doctrines which he delivers, in order to put them beyond all doubt. The grand error which we learn from his whole work is, that there are not three persons in one God. This stares you in the face, almost in every page, from the beginning to the end of his book. So in the very first chapter,

OF GOD THE CREATOR,

we read, "God is one, in essence and person, and Jesus Christ is he.

"Jesus Christ is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

"Before the creation of the world, there was no Trinity, but it was provided and made when God was manifested in the flesh, and then existed in the Lord Jesus Christ."

"A Trinity of Divine Persons existing before the creation of the world, is a Trinity of Gods."

10. But he is not content with denying the Trinity. He goes much farther than this: he excludes all that believe it from salvation, and counts it the most damnable of all heresies.

"The Church is now in so ruinous a state, that there are scarce any traces left of its ancient glory. And this has come to pass, in consequence of their dividing the Divine Trinity into three persons, each of which is declared to be God and Lord. This is the true source of all the Atheism in the world."

I believe no Arian, Socinian, or Mohammedan ever affirmed this before.

Again: "The Nicene and Athanasian doctrine concerning a Trinity, have given birth to a faith which has entirely overturned the Christian church."

Nay, Bishop Bull has indisputably proved, that this faith was delivered to the saints long before the Nicene council sat, and before Athanasius was born.

Yet again: "He that confirmeth himself in a plurality of gods, by a plurality of persons, becomes like a statue formed with moveable joints, in the midst of which Satan stands and speaks through its mouth."

So all that believe the Trinity are, according to his charitable sentence, possessed by the devil!

11. To confound all the Trinitarians at a stroke, he adds this memorable relation:—

"In the spiritual world (which lies in the midst between heaven and hell, having heaven above and hell below) are climates and zones as in the natural. The frigid zones are the habitation of those first spirits, who while on earth, were lazy and indolent. Having once a desire to visit them, I was carried in the spirit to a region covered with snow." Remember, this region was in the other world! "It was on the Sabbath day; and I saw a number of men, that is, human spirits, who had their heads covered with lions' skins, by reason of the cold;" (or who knows, but the poor spirits might have been frozen to death?) "their bodies, with the skins of leopards; and their legs and feet, with bears' skins. I also observed several riding in chariots, made in the shape of dragons with horns; they were drawn by small horses without tails, which ran with the impetuosity of terrible fierce beasts. They were all flocking toward a church, in which hung a tablet inscribed, 'A Divine Being, Consisting of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in essence one, but in persons three.'"

He has abundance of relations to the same purpose. I will add but one more:—

"I once saw a spirit as lightning falling from heaven. I asked him the reason of it. He replied, 'I was cast down, because I believed that God the Father and God the Son are two persons.' All the angels believe they are but one person; and every word that contradicts this, causeth in them

the same pain, as if they should snuff up some pungent powder into their nostrils, or as if one should bore their ears through with an awl. And every one has a place in heaven, according to his idea of God."

O no ; this is a deadly mistake ! Every one has a place in heaven, not according to his ideas, but according to his works.

But notwithstanding all his new revelations, I believe, according to the old one, "There are three that bare record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit ; and these three are one."

For the term *person* I contend not. I know no better : if any does, let him use it.

12. Let us now inquire, what is the Baron's own belief concerning the Trinity.

OF THE LORD THE REDEEMER.

"The Lord received his soul from Jehovah, and the divinity of the Father was the Lord's soul.

"The humnity whereby God sent himself into the world was the Son of God.

"The passion of the cross was the final temptation which the Lord endured as the Grand Prophet ; and it was the means of the glorification of his humanity ; that is, of its union with the divinity of the Father."

No. there is not a word in all the Bible concerning any such union of the humanity of Christ with the divinity of the Father. He was then glorified, when he was received again into the glory which he had before the world began.

13. What then is redemption ?

"Bringing the hells under subjection, and reducing the heavens into order. God's omnipotence in accomplishing this work was an effect of his humanity." Strange indeed ! "It is now believed, that his passion on the cross was the very act of his redemption. No : the act of his redemption consisted in this, that he accomplished the last judgment, which was executed in the spiritual world, and then separated the sheep from the goats, and drove out of heaven those that were united to the dragon. He then formed a new heaven of such as were found worthy, and a new hell of such as were found unworthy, and by degrees reduced all things in each place to order. By these acts he united himself to the Father, and the Father himself to him."

"The Lord is now accomplishing redemption ; that is subduing the hells and bringing the heavens into order ; which was begun in the year 1757, together with the last judgment executed at the same time."

What heaps of absurdity are here ! only fit to have a place in Orlando Furioso.

Redemption is "bringing the hells into subjection." When were they not in subjection to the Almighty ? "And reducing the heavens into order." When was heaven the abode of angels, out of order ? "God's omnipotence was an effect of his humanity." Blasphemy, joined with consummate nonsense. "He by degrees reduced them to order." *By degrees ?* No : a word, a nod from Jehovah was sufficient. "By these acts he united himself to the Father." Blasphemous nonsense again. The last judgment was executed in the year 1757." This is the top of all the Baron's discourses !

"It was once granted me to speak to the mother Mary. She appeared in heaven just over my head, and said, she was the mother of the Lord, as he was born of her; but that when he was made God he put off all the humanity he had from her. And therefore she is unwilling any should call him her son, because in him all is divine."

In all this jumble of dissonant notions, there is not one that is supported by any Scripture, taken in its plain, obvious meaning. And most of them are as contrary to Scripture as to common sense.

14. But here follows as curious an assertion as any: "Christ redeemed the angels as well as men. The angels could not have stood," (mark the proof!) "unless the Lord had wrought this redemption, because the whole angelic heaven with the church on earth is as a single man, whose internal is the angelic heaven, and whose external is the church. To be more particular: The highest heaven is the head; the second and lowest heaven are the breast and middle region of the body. The church on earth is the loins and the feet; the Lord is the soul of the whole man. Wherefore, unless the Lord had effected redemption, this whole man must have been destroyed; the feet and loins must have perished by the defection of the lowest heaven; the region of the breast, by the defection of the second heaven; and then the head, being left without a body, must of necessity have fallen to decay."

Surely such an argument has not often been seen! But it is full as good as the conclusion drawn from it, which is utterly inconsistent with the declaration of St. Paul, "He took not upon himself the nature of angels" in order to redeem them; but only that of man, in order to redeem lost mankind.

OF THE HOLY GHOST.

"The Holy Ghost is not God himself, but the divine operation of God.

"The Holy Ghost is divine truth. Therefore our Lord himself is also the Holy Ghost.

"The divine operation, signified by the Holy Ghost, consists in reformation and regeneration; and, in proportion as these are effected, in renovation, vivification, sanctification, and justification; and, in proportion as these are effected, in purification from evils, remission of sins, and final salvation."

Whoever is acquainted with the process of the work of God in the soul, must see, with the fullest evidence, that a man talking of it after this rate, is, if not a madman, ignorant of all vital religion.

15. Another grand truth which the Baron flatly denies is justification by faith; and he not only denies it, but supposes the belief of this also to exclude all that believe it from salvation.

"Do not you know that Luther has renounced his error with respect to justification by faith? and, in consequence thereof, is translated into the societies of the blessed?"

"The bottomless pit, mentioned Rev. ix, 2, is in the south-east quarter. Here all those are confined, who adopt the doctrine of justification by faith alone; and such of them as confirm that doctrine by the word of God are driven forth into a desert, and mixed with Pagans."

However, they need not stay there always; for the Baron assures us, that on "believing that God is not wind, but a man, they will be joined to heaven."

And we may hope the time is near; for he informs us, that "some months ago, the Lord called together his twelve Apostles,

and sent them forth through the whole spiritual world, as formerly through the natural, with a commission to preach the Gospel."

So if men have not saving faith in this world, they may have it in the world to come.

But indeed there is no room for any justification in the Scripture sense, that is, forgiveness, if, as he vehemently asserts, (after Jacob Behmen,) that God was never angry. "It is extravagant folly," says he, "to teach that God can be angry and punish; nay, it is blasphemy," says this bold man, "to ascribe anger to God." Then the Scripture is full of blasphemy; for it continually ascribes anger to God, both in the Old and in the New Testament. Nay, our Lord himself is a blasphemer; for he ascribes anger to God: "His Lord was wroth; yea, wroth to such a degree, that "he delivered him to the tormentors. So likewise shall your heavenly Father do also unto you," Matt. xviii, 34, 35. In flat opposition to which the Baron affirms, "God cannot sentence man to damnation!"

To those who affirm, with Jacob Behmen, the Baron, and most of the Mystics, that there is no wrath in God, permit me to recommend the serious consideration of only one more passage of Scripture: "And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and every bondman, and every freeman, said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" Rev. vi, 15—17. —Here I would ask, 1. Is not "He that sitteth on the throne" distinct from "the Lamb?" 2. Is not "the Lamb" Jesus Christ? God and man? 3. Is no wrath ascribed to him in these words? Who but a madman can deny it? And if there was no wrath in the Lamb, what were all these afraid of? a shadow that never had any real existence? Would the Baron have told them, "It is extravagant folly to suppose that God can be angry at all?"

16. But it is no wonder that he should utter such bold assertions, seeing he judges himself to be far wiser, not only than the inhabitants of this, but than those of the other world. "I was amazed," says he, (in one of the visits he favored them with,) "that people who had resided some time in the spiritual world, should be so ignorant still. Lest they should continue so, I waived my hand as a token for them to listen." He informs you farther, that "some of them fell into fits,"—hysterical or epileptic?

Again: "Being on a time in a conversation with angels, there joined us some spirits lately arrived from the other world. I related many particulars touching the world of spirits, which were before unknown to them."

Yet again: "Being in the world of spirits, I observed a paved way, quite crowded with spirits. I was informed, it was the way which all pass, when they leave the natural world. I stopped some of them, who did not yet know that they had left it, and questioned them about heaven and hell. They seemed altogether ignorant of them. I was amazed, and said, 'There is a heaven and a hell; and you will know this, when your present stupidity is dispelled. Every spirit, for a few days after death, imagines he is still alive in the world.'" No, not an hour; not a single moment! It is ab-

solutely impossible. " 'This is now the case with you.' So saying, the angels dispelled their ignorance : on which they exclaimed, 'O, where are we?' We said, 'You are no longer in the natural world, but in the spiritual.' They cried out, 'Then show us the way to heaven.' We said, 'Follow us.' They did so. The keepers of the gate opened it, and let us all in ; but when those who receive strangers examined them, they said instantly, ' Begone ; for ye have no conjunction with heaven.' So they departed and hastened back."

17. Permit me now to mention a few of his peculiar sentiments, before I proceed to those relative to the world of spirits.

"These truths are implanted in the understanding, in a place inferior to the soul."

What place is that, in the understanding, which is inferior to the soul ?

"Faith enters into man from the soul, into the superior regions of the understanding."

Is then the soul placed between the superior and inferior region of the understanding ?

"The human understanding is, as it were, the refining vessel, wherein natural faith is changed into spiritual faith."

I cannot at all comprehend this. It is quite above my understanding.

"The human mind is an organized form, consisting of spiritual substances within, and of natural substances without, and lastly, of material substances."

Nay, natural substances must be either matter or not matter. But indeed the mind is not matter, but spirit.

"Every man at death casteth off the body, and retains the soul only, with a circumambient, accretion, which is derived from the purest parts of nature. But this accretion in those admitted into heaven is undermost, and the spiritual part uppermost ; whereas in such as go to hell it is uppermost, and the spiritual part undermost. Hence a man-angel speaks by influence from heaven ; a man-devil by influence from hell."

"The form of God is truly and verily human ; for God is true and very man."

But the Scripture says, "God is not a man." Which shall I believe ? the Bible or the Baron ?

This is my grand objection to the Baron's whole system relative to the invisible world ; that it is not only quite unconnected with Scripture, but quite inconsistent with it. It strikes at the very foundation of Scripture. If this stands, the Bible must fall.

18. The account which he gives of the creation is this : "By the light and heat proceeding from the spiritual sun, spiritual atmospheres were created. These being three, three heavens were formed, one for the highest angels, another for angels of the second degree, and the third for the lowest angels. But the spiritual universe could not subsist without a natural universe.

Therefore the natural sun was created at the same time ; and by means of his light and heat, three natural atmospheres were formed, enclosing the former, as the shell of nut does the kernel." So then the spiritual world in the natural ! I thought it had been "in the midst between heaven and hell !" "By means of these atmospheres the terraqueous globe was formed, to be the abode of man and other animals. So God did not create the universe out of nothing, but by means of the spiritual sun."

But out of what did he create the spiritual sun? It was created, unless it was eternal. Therefore this, or something else, was created out of nothing, unless some creature was co-eternal with its Creator. So that we must come, at last, to something created out of nothing; and this alone is properly creation. In this sense it was that "God in the beginning created the heavens and the earth." And what a sublimity is there, with the utmost simplicity, in the Mosaic account of the creation! How widely different from the odd, whimsical account of the Baron and Jacob Behmen!

19. He informs you farther, "There is a full correspondence between angels and men." Of what kind? Not the wisest mortal can guess, till the Baron unfolds the mystery. "There is not a single society in heaven which does not correspond with some part or member in man. One society in heaven is in the province of the heart or pancreas. Others are in correspondence with the spleen or the stomach, with the eye or the ear, and so on. The angels also know in what district of any part of man they dwell. I have seen a society of angels, consisting of many thousands, which appeared as a single man.

"And God joins all the heavenly societies in one, that they may be as a single man in his sight. Yea, and he joins together the congregations in hell, that they may be as a single infernal form. He separates these from heaven by a great gulf, lest heaven should be an occasion of torment to them. When I had informed an assembly of spirits of these things, which they did not know before, the spirits which wore hats departed with their hats under their arms. In the spiritual world, the intelligent spirits wear hats; but the stupid wear bonnets, because they are bald, and baldness signifies stupidity."

I really think this needs no comment. He that can receive it, let him receive it.

20. "As angels and spirits are men, (for no angel was ever created such,) so they have divine worship; they have preaching in their temples; they have books and writings; particularly the word of God.

"The word, kept in the temples of the spiritual world, shines like a star of the first magnitude, sometimes like the sun; and from the radiance that encompasses it, there are beautiful rainbows formed about it. Yea, when any verse of it is wrote on paper, and the paper thrown into the air, that paper emits a bright light of the same form with the paper itself. And if any one rubs his hands, face, or clothes against the word, they emit a strong light, as I have often seen; but if any one who is under the influence of falsehood looks at the word, as it lies in the holy repository, it appears to him quite black. If he touches it, it occasions an explosion, attended with a loud noise; and he is thrown to a corner of the room, where he lies as dead for the space of an hour. If he write any passage of it on a piece of paper, and the paper be thrown up toward heaven, the same explosion follows, and the paper is torn to pieces and vanishes away."

Observe: These things could only be done by the almighty power of God. And can any one think the all-wise God would work all these miracles for no end?

21. "Every ver-e communicates with some particular society in heaven; and the whole communicates with the universal heaven. Therefore, as the Lord is God, so also heaven is the word." Exquisite nonsense and self-contradiction!

"There was an ancient word extant in the world, previous to that given to the children of Israel." I cannot believe it. I believe there were no let-

ters in the world, till God wrote the two tables. "This word is preserved in heaven; and also in Great Tartary.

"I have conversed with angels who came from Great Tartary, and informed me, the Tartars have had it time immemorial. They said likewise, that in this word is contained the 'Book of Jasher,' mentioned Joshua x, 13, and the book called, 'The Wars of the Lord,' mentioned Numbers xxi. 14. They told me that they cannot endure any foreigner to come among them; that the spirits from Tartary are separated from others, dwelling in a more eminent expanse; and they do not admit among them any from the Christian world. The cause of this separation is, because they are in possession of another word."

What, and do they envy it to others? And does this envy occasion their being so inhospitable? One may boldly say, this information never came from the angels of God!

OF HEAVEN AND HELL.

22. Many of the preceding errors are not small; neither are they of little importance. But of far greater importance are the accounts he gives us "concerning heaven and hell." I have now his treatise on this subject lying before me; a few extracts from which I shall lay before the reader:—

"Many learned Christians, when they find themselves, after death, in a body, in garments, and in houses, are in amazement"

And well they may be; since the Scripture gives us not the least intimation of any such thing.

"I have conversed with all whom I knew in the body, after their departure from it; with some for months, with some a year; and with many others, in all, I suppose, a hundred thousand; many of whom were in heaven, and many in hell."

Perhaps, in a course of years, the gentleman of Argos might see a hundred thousand actors.

"Spirits are men in human form; and still they see, hear, and enjoy their senses."

"When they enter the other world, they retain the same face and voice that they had before; but, after a time, these are changed, according to their predominant affection, into beauty or deformity."

"As soon as they arrive, all who were relations, friends, or acquaintance before, meet and converse together, having a perfect remembrance of each other. But they are soon parted, according to the different lives they had led, and no more see or know one another."

"Arians find no place in heaven, but are gradually divested of the power or thinking right on any subject. At length they either become mutes, or else talk foolishly, moping about with their arms hanging down before them, like paralytics or idiots."

"When a man dies, he is equally in a body as before, nor is there to all appearance the least difference; only it is a spiritual body, freed from all the grossness of matter; so he seems to himself to be as he was in this world, and knows not as yet that he has passed through death. He possesses every outward and inward sense that he possessed before; and he who took delight in studying, reads and writes as before. He leaves nothing behind him but his earthly covering; he takes with him his memory; retaining all that he ever heard, saw, read, learned, or thought in the world, from his infancy to his leaving it."

Who is able to reconcile this either with Scripture, philosophy, or common sense?

"After death, the examining angels inspect a man's face, and commence their inquest, which begins at the fingers of each hand, and is from thence continued throughout the whole body."

' Was ever so odd a thing imagined as this examining spirits from the fingers' ends ?

23. "The new comers are tried by good spirits. They are known from turning themselves frequently to certain points of the compass, and from taking the ways that lead thereto, when they are left alone.

"Men eminently holy are taken to heaven immediately after death ; and men eminently wicked cast into hell. But most spirits go through three states before they enter either hell or heaven.

"In the first, men do not know that they are dead. This may continue a week, a month, a year. Men and their wives commonly continue together a longer or shorter time, according as they agreed in this world. But if they have lived in variance, they usually break into strife and quarrelling, even unto fighting. Yet they are not totally separated till they enter their second state.

"The second state is their inferior state, in which both the good and bad, being stripped of all disguise and all self-deceit, see and show what spirit they are of.

"The third state is a state of instruction for them to go to heaven.

"But few spirits go to heaven till they have undergone vastation. This is performed in subterraneous places, where some pass through very painful discipline. Here they are divested of all earthly affections, without which admission into heaven would be attended with danger. The region appointed for vastation is under the feet, and surrounded with infernals. Evil spirits are employed in the vastation of the good."

Then the wicked do not cease from troubling, neither are the weary at rest !

How exceeding small is the difference between the Romish and the Mystic purgatory !

24. "Spirits that desire to go to heaven are told that God denies entrance into heaven to no one ; and if they desire it, they may be admitted into it and stay there. Some of them accordingly were admitted ; but no sooner did they enter, than they were struck with the influx of the heavenly light, and seized with such a heartfelt agony, that they were racked with infernal pains, and being mad with anguish, cast themselves down headlong.

"Sometimes hypocrites insinuate themselves into heaven. But they presently feel an inward anguish, on which they cast themselves headlong into hell among their fellows."

But how did they pass the great gulf ? Is it filled up since the time of Dives and Lazarus ?

25. Let us now consider what account the Baron gives of the inhabitants of heaven :—

"God sometimes appears in heaven in an angelical form, but commonly as a sun ; not horizontally or vertically, but before the face of the angels, in a middle attitude. He appears in two places, in one before the right eye, in the other before the left eye. Before the right, he appears as a perfect sun ; before the left, as a bright moon, of the same size with our moon, and surrounded with many lesser moons."

How agrees this poor, low, childish account, with that grand one of the Apostle's, "Who dwelleth in the light which no man can approach ; whom no man hath seen, nor can see ?" 1 Tim. vi. 1—16. No, nor men-angels, as the Baron calls them.

"There is not an angel in heaven that was created such, nor a devil

that was once a good angel ; but all the angels and all the devils were formerly men upon earth."

This grand position of the Baron, which runs through all his works, that all angels and devils were once men, without which his whole hypothesis falls to the ground, is palpably contrary to Scripture. We read in the thirty-eighth chapter of Job, "When I laid the foundations of the earth, the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." But man was not yet created. Therefore, these sons of God were not, nor ever had been, men.

On the other hand, we read, 2 Cor. xi. 3, "The serpent," that is, the devil, "beguiled Eve through his subtilty." But this devil could not have been man ; for Abel, the first man that died, was not yet born.

"The angels are of both sexes, and there is marriage in heaven as well as on earth. Their beatitudes of spiritual conjugal love may be reckoned up to many thousands.

How is this consistent with our Lord's words, "In the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven?" Matt. xxii. 30.

"The angels are not always in the same state, with regard to love and wisdom : sometimes their love is intense ; sometimes not. When it is lowest, they may be said to be in the shade, and in the cold, as their brightness is obscured, and their state unjoyous. They are eclipsed and in a joyless state ; otherwise, they would be carried away by self-love."

What ! Can the angels in heaven be "carried away by self-love ?" Then they may drop into hell.

"The angels of the highest heaven are naked, because they are in perfect innocence." (I thought all the angels had been in perfect innocence.)

"The next in flame-colored robes, the lower in white.

"The angels of an inferior heaven cannot converse with those of the superior ; neither can they see them when they look up, their heaven being veiled, as it were, with a dark mist : nor can the superior angels converse with them, without being deprived of their wisdom.

Divine influx passes from God to man through his forehead ; from the lower angels, all round from his forehead and temples ; from the highest angels, through the back part of his head."

26. It would be tedious to point out the particular oddities and absurdities in the preceding account. It may suffice to remark in general, that it contains nothing sublime, nothing worthy the dignity of the subject. Most of the images are low, and mean, and earthly, not raising, but sinking the mind of the reader ; representing the very angels of God in such a light, as might move us not to worship but despise them. And there is a grossness and coarseness in his whole description of the invisible world, which I am afraid will exceedingly tend to confirm rational infidels in a total disbelief of it.

27. But the most dangerous part of all his writings I take to be the account which he gives of hell. It directly tends to familiarize it to unholy men, to remove all their terror, and to make them

consider it, not as a place of torment, but a very tolerable habitation.

"In hell," says he, "there appear bats and owls, and likewise wolves, tigers, rats, and mice; and there grow thorns and thistles, briars and brambles. But these sometimes disappear; and then nothing is to be seen but heaps of stones, and fens full of croaking frogs."

Yes, much more is to be seen in his "Treatise on Heaven and Hell." Hear his own words —

"I was allowed to look into the hells: there are three hells, as well as three heavens: some of them appeared like caverns in rocks, first proceeding far horizontally, then descending, either perpendicularly or by windings to a great depth. Some resembled the dens of wild beasts; others, the subterraneous works in mines. Most of them are of three degrees of descent; the uppermost dark, the lowest of a fiery appearance. In some hells appear as it were, ruins of houses, in which infernal spirits skulk. In the milder hells are a kind of rude cottages; in some places like a city with streets and lanes, inhabited by infernal spirits, that live together in hatred, quarrellings, and fighting even to blood, while in the streets thefts and robberies are committed. There are also gloomy woods in which the spirits wander like wild beasts; and caves, into which some, when pursued by others, fly for refuge. Moreover, there are sandy deserts, with ragged rocks and scattered cottages; and to these deserts the worst spirits are at last driven."

23. But how does this agree with what we read in the Scripture concerning hell fire?

The Baron answers: "Hell fire is not a material fire, but it is the love of self and the world, together with all the inordinate passions and evil concupiscences springing therefrom. They who are in hell have no sensation of heat or burning, but only such kind of heat as inflames their evil passions. But this heat is turned into intense cold, on any influx of heat from heaven. At such times, the infernals are seized with a convulsive shiver, like people in an ague fit."

It was said, "Evil spirits cast themselves into hell of their own accord. How does this come to pass? There exhale from hell into the world of spirits certain fetid vapors, which evil spirits are greedily fond of. For as was he sin which each was fond of in this life such is the stink of which he is fond in the next. Thus they that had perverted divine truths, delight in urinous smells; misers, in such smells as proceed from swine and putrefying flesh; while such as lived in sensual pleasures, find their gratification in ordure; and hence we may perceive whence melancholy and lowness of spirits proceed. Those spirits that delight in things indigested and putrid, such as meats corrupted in the stomach, hold their confabulations in such sinks of uncleanness in man as are suitable to their impure affections. These spirits are near the stomach; some higher, some lower, and occasion uneasiness of mind: but this anguish, those who know no better, ascribe to disorders of the stomach or bowels."

But to return: "From every particular hell, exhale effluvia from the qualities of the spirits therein. These striking the senses of those that are of similar affections, excite in them the most grateful perceptions. They presently turn to the quarter whence those effluvia rise, and hasten to be there. On their first arrival, they are received with a show of kindness; but it lasts only a few hours; then they are vexed all manner of ways. And these miseries are called hell fire."

"Gnashing of teeth means, the various disputes and wranglings of such as are in error."

How egregiously trifling is this account! So puerile, so far beneath the importance of the subject, that one who did not know

the character of the writer, might naturally imagine he was turning it into burlesque.

29. But the masterpiece of all he has wrote upon the head, you have in the following account, which I transcribe at large, that the pious reader may know how to judge of this highly illuminated author :—

“The state of those who enter the other world is as follows :—

1. As soon as they die, they do not know for some days but that they are living in the former world.” This is a favorite sentiment of the Baron ; but how palpably absurd ! “2. They then see they are in the world of spirits, which is between heaven and hell.” No : this will never agree with our Lord’s words, “To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise :” neither with those, “The rich man also died ; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment.” Here was no interval ; but as soon as ever he had left the earth, he was lifting up his eyes in hell ! “3. The new spirit is led about to various societies, good and bad, and examined how he is affected by one or the other. 4. If he is affected with good, he is introduced to good ones of various kinds, till he comes to a society corresponding with his own natural affection. He there puts off the natural, and puts on the spiritual affection, and then is taken up into heaven.” How utterly contrary is this roundabout way, to the plain words of Scripture, “The poor man died, and was carried of angels into Abraham’s bosom !” See, the instant the soul left the body, it was lodged in the paradise of God. “5. They who have no affection to good are introduced to the evil societies of various kinds, till they come to one that corresponds with their evil affections.” O no ! The devil and his angels will make shorter work with those that know not God. “6. Such as formerly enjoyed power and authority are made rulers over societies ; but as they knew not how to use their authority, after a few days they are degraded from it. I have seen such spirits, when they were removed from one society to another, and invested with power in each ; yet, after a short time, degraded in all. 7. After frequent degradations they do not care to engage in any other public office, but retire and sit down in sadness, till they are removed into a desert, where there are cottages for their habitations. There work is given them to do ; and in proportion as they do it, they receive food ; but if they do it not, they are kept fasting, till hunger forces them to work. Food in the spiritual world is like the various kinds of food in our world ; and it is given from heaven by the Lord to every one, according to the services he performs ; for to him who does no service, no food is given,” Did ever mortal before so practice the art of sinking ? give so poor, low, gross an account of the other world ? But he proceeds : “8. After some time, they are disgusted with all employment ; and then they go out of their cottages, and sit down in solitude and indolence : but as no food is given them, they

grow hungry, and think of nothing but how they may get something to eat. Some of whom they ask alms, say, 'Come with us, and we will give you work and meat too.'" Can any one believe this—that spirits suffer hunger, and are obliged to go a begging? "9. They work awhile, but then leave their work, and betake themselves to company till their masters turn them off. 10. On their dismissal, they see a path that leads to a sort of cavern. The door is opened, and they enter in, and ask whether any food is to be had there. Being answered, 'There is,' they ask leave to stay there, and leave is given them. They are brought into the cavern, and the door is shut after them. The governor of the cavern comes and says, 'Ye are never to leave this place more. Behold your companions: they all work hard; and in proportion to their work they receive food from heaven.' Their companions then tell them, 'Our governor knows for what work every one is best suited. He enjoins it daily, and when we have finished our work we receive our food.'" O how much more comfortable is the condition of these spirits in hell, than that of the galley slaves at Marseilles, or the Indians in the mines of Potosi! "But if we will not finish our work, we receive neither food nor clothes.'" *Clothes!* I never knew before that we should want any in the other world. "If any does mischief to another, he is thrown into a corner of the cavern, upon a couch of cursed dust." Does he mean of hot ashes? "Here he is miserably tormented, till the governor sees he repents; and then he is taken off, and ordered again to his work." Was ever any thing more curious, or more encouraging to men that resolve to live and die in their sins? You see, there is place for repentance even in hell! If he repent of his sins even there, though he may be tormented awhile, yet the devil, seeing him penitent, will have mercy upon him! But here is more comfort still: "Every one in hell is at liberty to walk, converse, and to sleep, when he has done his work. He is then"—Surely such a thought never entered into the heart of a Christian before!—"He is then led into the inner part of the cavern, where there are harlots, and he is permitted to take one for himself." Amazing! So the Christian Koran exceeds even the Mohammedan! Mohammed allowed such to be in paradise; but he never thought of placing them in hell! The Baron should have concluded here; for nothing can exceed this. But he adds: "Hell consists of such caverns, which are nothing but eternal work houses. The work of those who were unjust judges is to prepare vermilion, and to mix it up into a paint, to paint the faces of harlots. The most abandoned spirits are driven into a wilderness, and compelled to carry burdens."

So here is the uttermost punishment that is allotted for the worst of all the damned spirits!

30. I will add but one more of the Baron's dreams, to illustrate one of the preceding: "Satan was once permitted to ascend out of hell with a woman to my house. She was of the tribe of Sirens, who can assume all figures,

and all habits of beauty and ornament. And such are harlots in the world of spirits. I asked Satan if the woman was his wife. He answered, 'Neither I, nor any in our society have wives: she is my harlot.' She then inspired him with wanton lust, and he kissed her and cried, 'Ah, my Adonis!' I said, 'What do thou and thy companions think of God?' He said, 'God, heaven, angels, and the like. are all empty words.' I answered, 'O Satan, thou hast lost thy understanding! Recollect that thou hast lived in another world!' Immediately his recollection returned, and he saw his error. But the cloud soon returned upon his understanding, and he was just the same as before."

31. Having now taken a sufficient view of the Baron's reveries, let us turn to the oracles of God. What saith the Scripture? What account does God himself give of the state of wicked men after death? Not to multiply texts, I will cite a very few out of many that might be produced: "Tophet is ordained of old: he hath made it deep and large;" (God himself, not man :) "The pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, as a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it," Isaiah xxx. 33. "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched," Mark ix. 47, 48. "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," Matt. xxv. 41. "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power," 2 Thess. i. 9. And in what condition are those that are punished with this everlasting destruction? Do they eat, and drink, and wear apparel, and choose themselves harlots, and walk, and enjoy sweet sleep? If the word of God is true, if "the Scripture cannot be broken" the wicked, one and all, "are cast into a lake of fire, burning with brimstone," Rev. xix. 20. Yea, "whosoever is not found written in the book of life, will be cast into the lake of fire," xx. 15. But they will not eat, or drink, or converse, or dally with women; neither will they sleep there. For "they have no rest day nor night; but the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever!"

32. Who illuminated either Jacob Behmen, or Baron Swedenborg, flatly to contradict these things? It could not be the God of the holy Prophets; for he is always consistent with himself. Certainly it was the spirit of darkness. And indeed "the light which was in them was darkness," while they labored to kill the never dying worm, and to put out the unquenchable fire! And with what face can any that profess to believe the Bible, give any countenance to these dreamers? that filthy dreamer, in particular, who takes care to provide harlots, instead of fire and brimstone, for the devils and damned spirits in hell! O my brethren, let none of you that fear God recommend such a writer any more! much less labor to make the deadly poison palatable, by sweetening it with all care! All his folly and nonsense we may excuse; but not his making God a liar; not his contradicting, in so open and flagrant a manner, the whole oracles of God! True, his tales are often exceeding lively, and as entertaining as the tales of the fairies: but I dare not give up my Bible for them; and I must give up one or the other. If the preceding extracts are from God, then the Bible is only a fable: but if "all Scriptures are given by inspiration of God," then let these dreams sink into the pit from whence they came.

WAKEFIELD, May 9, 1782.

JOHN WESLEY.